

Black Dog



BLACK

FROG

Presents

the

LINSEY

McKIBBIN

RODRIGUEZ

Letters

This is actually BLACK FROG #13, but it is in effect a very special issue of Black Frog. It is being sent to BF subbers at no extra charge, but is also being made available to nonsubbers for a supplemental charge of \$2.00 for each copy.

Because the Diplomacy hobby needs to know the content of the LINSEY-McKIBBIN-RODRIGUEZ letters, Black Frog takes pride in publishing them as a public service!!!

INTRODUCTION

Unknown to most, Bruce Linsey (Brux) and Matt McKibbin have been playing a very bizarre Diplomacy game over the past year. This two player challenge game has been gamemastered by Al Rodriguez and has produced one of the most unusual correspondence file that the hobby has ever known. I am very proud to bring the entire matter to light by publishing part of that letter file in this special supplement issue of Black Frog.

Matt McKibbin was the Austrian player in 1979IC (the "Black Hole" game) in Linsey's zine "Voice of Doom". In early 1980, Matt was ejected from the game by Bruce in a highly publicized hobby controversy, the details of which I won't go into here.

From the "Black Hole" controversy came a challenge (I think McKibbin challenged Linsey, but it might have been vice-versa) to a two-player Diplomacy game--to see who was best. The challenge was accepted and Al Rodriguez was selected to GMaster. The game started early in the spring with McKibbin playing Turkey, Austria and France. Linsey played England, Italy and Russia. Germany was to be neutral with units standing in civil disorder.

The game results were published (by carbon copy) in a one page handwritten flyer that he called "Wetback". Apparently Al sent out carbon copies to the two players and kept the originals in his file.

The entire file came to my attention when Al's roommate, Tom Heflin, brought it, without Al's knowledge, to Pacificon on Labor Day weekend. Although Tom showed me the file, he didn't want to give it to me until I bribed him with a "Big Mac" and the phone numbers of two chicks in Santa Cruz.

The Diplomacy Hobby needs to know, thus I am compelled to publish at least part of the file.

I was tempted to simply xerox the letters, but they are all handwritten and hard to read. This is particularly true of the Rodriguez letters that are mostly written on a waxy yellow paper that must have had an original use of wrapping green chile burritos. Thus I am retyping the letters for clarity. There are a few minor editing changes--mostly to delete expletives. I am not including all the letters, but will pick up the game in early July and carry it to the last letter (available to me) dated August 28th.

Jack Masters

THE LINSEY-McKIBBIN-RODRIGUEZ LETTERS

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letter #1: Linsey to Rodriguez
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July 6th, 1980

Dear Al:

I was more than a little chagrined today, on going through the mail, to find that you had credited me with an NMR in the McKibbin challenge game for the Spring '06 season.

I will assure you that my orders were mailed in-- although the postal service returned them to me for a small error in addressing--precisely, the omission of your name, residence and zip code, coupled with a failure to append postage.

That I have been disconcerted of late due to Lee Kendter Jr threatening me with cross-game tactics is no secret. Couple this with the recent downward spiral in VoD subbers and you can appreciate my situation. I do not offer this as an excuse for my negligence and ineptitude. I goofed. Forgive me. But provide me rectification.

Please then take the attached orders and re-adjudicate the season. I think then that we will be able to proceed with our little game a bit more accurately and fairly if you do.

Once again, I beg you accept sincerest apologies for the unfortunate carelessness, and I await anxiously your re-adjudications.

Sincerely,

Brux

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Letter #2: Rodriguez to McKibbin and Linsey
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"WETBACK" #14

July 9th, 1980

Brux has written and claimed extraordinary circumstances resulting in his NMR last season. While in an ordinary game the NMR would have to stand, we all do realize that this is certainly no ordinary game. Thus, Brux will have a second chance to submit orders.

I discussed this matter over the phone with Matt and while Matt was (shall we say) not too happy he did agree to allowing Brux to resubmit orders for his NMR on the condition that he be allowed to resubmit his (McKibbin's) own orders as well.

This I did agree to since Brux could very well (although I am certain he would never stoop so low) have written his orders after having seen McKibbin's moves as published in my last memo. (You must admit Brux that the orders you submitted were extremely effective when adjudicated against Matt's orders.)

Anyway we have below, the corrected Spring 1901 adjudications based on Linsey's orders and upon the re-submitted McKibbin orders.

I trust this will be acceptable to everyone. Orders for the Fall 1906 season are due in ten days as is normal.

Rodriguez

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Letter #3: Linsey to Rodriguez
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July 14th, 1980

Dear Al:

I received WB #14 today. While I am very pleased that you did allow my orders, I am, on the other hand, very unhappy about your allowing McKibbin to resubmit his.

Did it not occur to you that McKibbin in knowing that my orders were very effective against his could have very carefully plotted what my orders were. He could have taken his orders and then figured the best and most effective counter orders against them and then could have used these orders (that he figured out) as the basis for my orders. And then after knowing almost precisely what my orders were, calculated the most effective counter orders to submit as his revised orders? You must admit that his orders were very effective against mine. Right?

But this is not the primary basis of my complaint. My complaint is based upon McKibbin's order of the Turkish army in Bohemia to Munich. The Turkish army was not in Bohemia but in Galicia. (Actually McKibbin moved it to Bohemia in his original S'06 orders--the ones that he took back.) By allowing Matt to order Turkish A Boh to Mun, you are in effect allowing him to make two consecutive moves. This does of course give him a very unfair advantage, wouldn't you say?

This is over and done with and to retrace our steps and replay once again the S'06 season would be a very tedious and time consuming situation. Therefor, I feel the best way to rectify this entire matter is to allow me to have the opportunity of making two consecutive moves at this time. Fair is fair.

My proposed orders are appended.

Sincerely,

Brux

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Letter #4: Rodriguez to McKibbin
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July 18th, 1980

Dear Matt:

Would you care to comment on Linsey's letter of 14 July (xerox attached)? Bruce takes acception to the movement of your Turkish army Bohemia to Munich in S'06. My records do agree with his, the army was not in Bohemia in Fall 1905 and appears to have been moved there only in your first set of Spring 1906 orders that you took back and revised.

I have absolutely no intention of granting Brux his wish of being able to play two seasons in a row to compensate--but he does have his point and I would like to get that Turkish army in its rightful spot.

Please let me hear from you right away so I can get an answer back to Brux. As soon as the location of the Turkish army can be determined, I hope the remaining seasons of the game can be played out with smoothness and alacrity.

Sincerely,

Al

P.S. More and more I am regreting my agreement to gamemaster this game.

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Letter #5: McKibbin to Rodriguez
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July 21st, 1980

Dear Al:

Received your latest letter today, and while it is just short of coherence, I think I can see where your bewilderment lies. The Turkish army in question was not in Galicia in F'05, but was in Silesia. In my S'06 orders, I did indeed order it to Bohemia and this is perhaps the reason for the confusion in Brux's already clouded mind. (We both know that Brux's recent setbacks in the Diplomacy tournament at Origins has left his mind somewhat more fragmented and disorganized than normal, even to the point of causing a mild breach with the real world as we know it.)

The solution is, of course, very simple. The Turkish army is in Silesia and instead of moving from Bohemia to Munich; it moves from Silesia to Munich and the end result is the same--place one yellow Turkish army in Munich.

I see no reason why the game cannot go right ahead then and my Fall 1906 orders are attached.

Sincerely,

Matt

P.S. Linsey's letter must surely have been meant in jest anyway; he couldn't have seriously thought that I would agree to granting him the right to have two consecutive moves. Was he expecting to have two consecutive moves by one army--or by all of his units?

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Letter #6: Rodriguez to Linsey
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July 25th, 1980

Dear Bruce:

I have enclosed a Xerox copy of Matt's reply to your charges in regard to the location of the Turkish army. It seems this unit was in Silesia in F'05 and not in Bohemia or Galicia. But since it is very permissable for the army to move from Silesia to Munich and since Munich is clearly where Matt wants to place this army--there need be no change in the Spring 1906 adjudications. Simply regard the Turkish army as presently being in Munich and take it from there.

I have Matt's orders on hand here and as soon as I receive yours, I will publish the Fall 1906 adjudications and we can get on with the game.

Sincerely,

Al

CC: Matt McKibbin

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Letter #7: Linsey to Rodriguez
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July 29th, 1980

Dear Al:

How curious your last letter was! Well-intended I am sure, concise, containing all the elements that would appear to make up what passes for a communicative effort, but tinged throughout by what I am prone to call "nothingness."

Surely you were not taken in by McKibbin's foolish contention that his Turkish army was in Silesia. You must be aware that Matt is on the very verge of losing this game and from this desperate situation will stop short at nothing to turn an advantage. A very sad situation I will assure you, but true none the less.

Not only was the Turkish army not in Silesia in Fall 1905, but it has never been in Silesia in the entire game. Further more I have taken the liberty of checking with my good friend Mark Berch. Mark has just finished an analysis of 1645 Turkish games for a book he is writing. In a total of 1645 Turkish games, there has not been a Turkish army in Silesia in Fall 1905 in a single one of them. Now doesn't that tell you something?

I have just spent the better part of the last two days sorting out the previous adjudications in this game and tracing the movements of the Turkish armies in this game and I find that the army in question is actually not even in Galicia but in Ukraine. In Spring '04, Matt ordered the army from Ukr to Gal--but it was held off by the orders for one of my armies. In your adjudications, you capitalized UKR and not Gal (properly) but did not underline the order. Matt, who is never as meticulous as myself in looking over adjudications, must have let this one slip by because he has been ordering the unit to move from Galicia ever since.

Now that I have cleared up the problem, I suggest that you place the Turkish army back in Ukraine, where it properly belongs, and that we proceed with the game.

My orders, which are based on the Turkish army being in Ukraine are attached.

Brux

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Letter #8: Rodriguez to Linsey and McKibbin
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"WETBACK" #15

August 2nd, 1980

I have meticulously gone over the previous seasons on my own, but unfortunately I have been unable to ascertain exactly what territory the Turkish army belongs in. The game has been so sloppily played with so many blunders and duplicities from both of you that it is beyond my power to straighten it out at this time.

May we leave leave it to the gods? What I suggest is that I close my eyes and toss a Turkish army on the game board (aiming in the general area of northern Austria) and that we all agree to accept it as being in whatever spot it may land on? If nothing else, it should add an element of spice to our little encounter.

If you agree to this, let me know as soon as possible. I would like nothing better than getting this damn game over with.

Al

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Letter #9: Linsey to Rodriguez
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August 6th, 1980

Dear Alfredo:

Very shrewd my friend. Yes, I do agree to your tossing the Turkish army onto the game board and I will accept it in the territory in which it lands.

You and I, of course, have known all along the correct location of this Turkish army. The only problem has been getting McKibbin to accept reality. McKibbin's psychic apparatus is a bit sluggish these days I am afraid. No doubt the result of the constant tension of trying to defend a series of increasingly hopeless positions in our little game. At any rate I intend to end the contest swiftly and mercifully, before the pressure does him permanent damage.

Yes (heh, heh!) I am very confident that you will be able to toss that little yellow block so that it will land exactly where it belongs--in Ukraine.

My orders for the fall season, based on the Turkish army in Ukraine (you see how confident I am in you?) are attached.

Brux

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Letter #10: McKibbin to Rodriguez
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August 6th, 1980

Dear Al:

O.K. toss it! I have no doubt but what you mean well and that your little toss is nothing more than a scheme to pacify Linsey while you see to it that the Turkish piece goes where it properly belongs (which you and I both know is in Bohemia).

I realize that GMing this game has indeed been a lot of trouble for you--though I do assure you that I appreciate the trouble. I just wonder, however, if you realize how important the one little Turkish army is to me? If you toss it into Bohemia (or even into Silesia or Munich) I will be able to win the game in the fall season. You do understand this don't youonce and for all the game will be over with and out of your hair. Of course if the army were to land in any other square, the outcome would be the same. Ultimately that is--I would certainly end up winning--but several more seasons would be required, and this would be a lot of trouble for all of us.

You have already granted Brux the most incredible brace of unorthodoxies to ever grace a Diplomacy game. All this has done is to slow down the inevitable conclusion--the McKibbin win!

Matt

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Letter #11: Rodriguez to McKibbin and Linsey
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"WETBACK" #16

August 12th, 1980

This evening I invited Dan Kuszynski over to my place. Dan, as well as Tom Heflin, witnessed the toss of the yellow army.

I set up a regulation Diplomacy game board on the floor, stood four feet away, Dan placed a blindfold (actually an aviator cap turned backwards) and Tom placed the yellow army in my right hand. I gently tossed this towards what I thought would be the center of the board, listened until it quit bouncing and then removed the blindfold (aviator cap).

The army rested squarely in the middle of the ADRIATIC SEA! Since it is an army and not a fleet and cannot float, I am forced to rule that it is annihilated!

Proceed without it. The deadline for F'07 orders will be August 20th, 1980. Both of you please try to get your orders in on time and in proper order this time.

A1

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Letter #12: McKibbin to Rodriguez
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August 15th, 1980

Dear Al:

It has become necessary for me to point out an error that occurred way back in the Fall 1902 season.

It involves the original Turkish fleet, the one that originated in Ankara. Please trace with me for a few minutes the movements of this fleet:

Spring 1901	F Ank to Bla
Fall 1901	F Bla (S) Austrian A Bud to Rum
Spring 1902	F Bla to Rum
Fall 1902	"A" Rum to Ukr

Thus in Fall 1902 my original Turkish fleet, through an error on my part that you failed to correct, suddenly became an army. This is the same Turkish army that later wandered through Galicia, Bohemia and Silesia--and which, more recently, you tossed into the Adriatic Sea.

Now that it is in the Adriatic, I want it correctly identified as a fleet!

My fall moves are attached, they presume that the unit in the Adriatic Sea is indeed a Turkish fleet and not an army.

Sincerely,

Matt

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Letter #13: Rodriguez to McKibbin
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August 18th, 1980

Matt:

Your army is gone! Kiss it off!

It is not a fleet! It is not even an amphibious unit! It is not! It was an army. You agreed to having me toss it on a game board and playing it from where it landed.

It landed in the Adriatic Sea, it cannot stay there. It is annihilated. I am sorry!

Since you seem to be having a difficult time in accepting this reality--I will extend the deadline for Fall 1907 orders by four days.

Sincerely,

Al

CC: Bruce Linsey

(Bruce please note the four day extension!)

Letter #14: Linsey to Rodriguez

August 19th, 1980

Al:

Enclosed are my F'07 orders in the challenge game.

Please note that my position is perfect, that no matter what moves McKibbin counters with he fails to take Munich, to hold me out of Tunis and St.Pete, and that he also cannot retake Belgium or Sevastopol.

I WIN THE GAME! THE BETTER PLAYER HAS PREVAILED!

The competition proved to be too much for McKibbin, he was actually beaten long ago--but to his credit he stuck with the game to the bitter end. If it is any consolation to him, you can tell him that several of the very best players--with many years of experience--have also succumbed to me in two-player games, and with almost as much ease as he did.

Thank you once again, Alfredo, for GMing for us. Since you are out a lot of time, not to mention postage, as a result of handling this chore--I am going to credit your sub to Voice of Doom for one additional issue!

Sincerely,

BRUX

P.S. For your convenience in finalizing this game, I am enclosing a copy of the standard Diplomacy conference map showing the final location and movements of all of my units as well as Matts. This should be a great aid to you in working up the final adjudications.

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Letter #15: McKibbin to Rodriguez
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August 21st, 1980

Dear Al:

Enclosed are my Fall 1907 orders in the Linsey-McKibbin challenge game.

First of all, however, please note my summer '07 retreat: The Turkish Army in the Adriatic Sea retreats to Apulia.

Then note my moves. With the retreat to Apulia, I am able to win very handily in the fall season, even though I don't take Munich. Against the best possible moves by Linsey--I take Rome, hold Naples and Tunis and force my way into Moscow. The very best that Linsey can do is to retake Sevastopol--and I doubt if he will.

Well, I guess that I really taught Mr. Big Shot Linsey a lesson. Just cause he publishes a fancy zine and has a lot of suction with John Michalski, John Kelley, Mark Berch and Konrad Baumeister does not make him a better player.

Thanks amigo for gamemastering. I owe you one. If you ever get down to Fullerton, look me up; I'll treat you to a green chile burrito. I know you like them (I can smell green chile everytime I open your letters) and there is a great spot for them nearby.

Sincerely,

Matt

P.S. I have marked up a game map showing the final locations of all the units in the game and my orders. All you will have to do is to match up Bruce's orders with his units on this map and make the adjudications. It is very apparent that I have won and he cannot counter my final moves.

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Letter #16: Rodriguez to McKibbin and Linsey
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"WETBACK" #17

August 24th, 1980

.....the final issue of "wetback".....

Well, gentlemen I have carefully gone over your final set of orders and the game maps that you both submitted.

What becomes immediately apparent is the fact, based on your game maps, that the two of you for at least several seasons, have been playing two completely different games. There is only about a 60% correlation between the two.

I am going to declare both games over as of the Fall 1907 season:

McKibbin is the winner of one, and

Linsey is the winner of the other.

Should either of you want a rematch--don't let me know about it. I will have nothing to do with it!

Personally I think that both of you should give up Diplomacy. Have either of you ever thought about playing something simpler? Perhaps Scrabble. I tried Scrabble once a few years ago, it is a somewhat simpler game with less hostilities developed between the players.

A1

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Letter #17: Linsey to Rodriguez
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August 28th, 1980

Dear Al:

After a careful recheck, I find that I won both Diplomacy games; McKibbin's and mine. But, I won't torment you with the further details. I do believe that basically you are a decent man (one day some sort of therapy will bear me out).

I accept your invitation to GM a Scrabble match between McKibbin and myself in good spirits. Since Matt had first choice of country in Diplomacy, I shall make the first play here.

The seven letters I have just turned up are O, A, E, J, N, R and Z. This is an unpromising jumble that should guarantee, even to the most suspicious, the integrity of my draw. Fortunately, however, my extensive vocabulary, coupled with a penchant for esoterica, has enabled me to bring etymological order out of what, to one less literate, might seem a mishmash. My first word is "ZANJERO". Look it up. Now lay it out, horizontally, the E resting upon the center square. Count carefully, not overlooking the double word score for an opening move and the fifty-point bonus for my use of all seven letters. The score is now 116 to 0.

McKibbin's move.

Brux

P.S. Please note my new address in Leisureville, NY. I am going back to school this fall and hope to get my credentials to teach.